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Schools of the Commission of National Education in the Samogitian Department

Summary: The aim of the article is to present the state and problems of the schools of the Commission of National Education in the Samogitian Department. The department, farthest to the north, was the smallest in terms of territory, and the Duchy of Samogitia itself was ethnically and religiously diverse. The problems of the department, as well as of most schools, concerned the poor condition of the buildings, the lack of teaching aids and occasional insubordination of teachers and students.

Keywords: Commission of National Education, Duchy of Samogitia, school, student, teacher

Operating in the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Commission of National Education (KEN) laid down in 1783 a new administrative structure based on departments. Along with the four departments created in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Lithuanian, Navahrudak and Polesian Departments, was the Samogitian Department¹, which largely covered with its reach the Duchy of Samogitia, situated in the north-eastern part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. To the west, it bordered on Prussia, to the south and east, the Trakai Province, and to the north, the feudatory Duchy of Courland and Semigallia. Shortly before the new education system was lawfully put into place, in 1782, the Commission designated conscientious and meticulous Grzegorz Piramowicz to carry out school visitations in that region. Piramow-

¹ The 3 May 1783 sitting of the Commission of National Education saw a presentation of a list of religious orders and schools in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (*Tabela zgromadzeń i szkół w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim*), and a few days before that, on 19 April, the Commission had set down the new division in departments in the Crown (*Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1785*, ed. M. Mitera-Dobrowolska, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1973, 252—253).

icz's report demonstrated that the state of the Samogitia education system was unsatisfactory. The schools had lacked repair, school supplies and textbooks intended for instruction under new rules were scarce, but the biggest problem was posed by the unqualified teaching staff². However, Piramowicz had no doubts that for social reasons the Samogitian Department had to be created because that was "what the citizens of the Duchy wished for"³.

Each department was to accommodate one six-class school — a department school. However, it was difficult in Samogitia to identify a school that could meet the requirements to become one. In his report, Piramowicz recommended that the Commission take into consideration two cities, Kaunas (Kowno) and Kražiai (Krože), and presented strong arguments in favour of both of the venues. Kaunas' merit was that it was a county city and the school was intended to be headed by the rector, whereas in Kražiai "the number of students was bigger than in Kaunas [...] and the building more spacious, not requiring so much repair"⁴. It was the latter argument that swayed the Commission. Therefore, the Kražiai school was designated in 1783 as the department school.

Schools in Kražiai had existed since the early 17th century, when, in 1613, Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł ("Sierotka") handed his castle over to the Jesuits, and a year later, Samogitia County Governor Jan Karol Chodkiewicz funded a college there. That school enjoyed quite big popularity with nearly 300 boys attending it annually in the 17th and early 18th centuries⁵. More than anything else, the school owed its popularity to its educational staff. The teachers included, among others, Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, awarded with the poetry laurel by Pope Urban VIII, Zygmunt Lauksmin, the author of textbooks for learning Greek, rhetoric and music (*Ars et praxis musicae*), and Karol Wyrwicz. The school housed a well-stocked library, but in the social aspect, its greatest accomplishment was its theatre, which was one of the Commonwealth's more important school theatres⁶.

Under the governance of the Commission of National Education, the school was initially composed of three classes, and subsequently, after 1783, converted

² *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkół Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim (1782—1792)*, ed. K. Bartnicka, I. Szybiak, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1974, 93—94.

³ *Raporty...*, 91.

⁴ *Raporty...*, 91.

⁵ In 1694, the number of students was 284, in 1695 — 283, 1669 — 264, 1697 — 269, 1698 — 299, 1699 — 314, 1700 — 285, 1701 — 303, 1702 — 260, 1703 — 263, 1704 — 251, 1705 — 306, 1716 — 124, 1717 — 133 (M. Wołonczewski, *Biskupstwo żmujdzkie*, transl. M. Hryszkiewicz, pref. S. Smolka, Kraków, 1898, 139).

⁶ J. Okoń, *Dramat i teatr szkolny. Sceny jezuickie XVII wieku*, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1970.

into a six-class school. The first class provided instruction in Polish and Latin grammar, arithmetic, morals, elementary geography and natural history. Knowledge in these subjects was expanded in Class 2. On completion of this elementary education of sorts, conducted by a single teacher, lessons were conducted by teachers of the relevant subjects from Class 3 onwards: speech teacher — Polish and Latin grammar, history of ancient literature and rhetoric, morals and the law, as well as ancient history combined with geography; mathematics teacher — arithmetic, algebra, geometry, logic and technical drawing; physics teacher — aside physics, natural history combined with agriculture and horticulture, hygiene, as well as history of art and skills. Additionally, those interested could attend lessons of German, whereas French and drawing were taught “only in major cities, namely at the Main Schools, with public funding”⁷.

The Samogitian Department included six sub-department schools, two academic schools, in Kaunas and Kretinga, subject directly to the Main School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and four monastic schools. By permission of the Commission of National Education, the monastic schools were run by the Piarists in Ukmergė, Panevėžys and Raseiniai and the Dominicans in Virbalis. All of those towns were rather small, provincial and poor. Kaunas was the largest one — a county city of the Trakai Province. Unfortunately, due to wars, troops descending upon the city, but above all, the partitions which had cut away the natural commercial routes by land and river, blocking off agricultural and handicraft producers, as well as people visiting market fairs, the city had begun degenerating and depopulating. Kretinga was a private town, founded in 1610 by Jan Karol Chodkiewicz, subsequently handed over to the Sapiehas, and in the mid-18th century — to Ignacy Massalski. Unlike Kaunas, inhabited by 13% of Jews⁸, it was inhabited only by Christians, mostly Catholics, but also Orthodox Christians and Protestants. All the other towns consisted only of monasteries and a dozen or so houses.

Under the Acts of the Commission of National Education, sub-department schools employed fewer than six teachers, and in the Samogitian Department, usually only three. During six years of education, the syllabus was taught in three two-year classes. The teacher of Class 1 taught Latin and Polish grammar, morals, elementary arithmetic and elementary geography. From Class 2 onwards, the relevant subjects were taught by the other two teachers. Therefore, during four years, the speech and morals teacher taught grammar with elements of Latin literature, speech, morals and law, as well as ancient history and geog-

⁷ *Ustawy Komisji Edukacji Narodowej dla Stanu Akademickiego i na szkoły w krajach Rzeczypospolitej przepisane*, ed. K. Bartnicka, Warsaw, 2015, 129.

⁸ *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, ed. F. Sulimierski, B. Chlebowski, W. Walewski, 4, Warsaw, 1883, 522—529.

raphy. On his part, during four years, mathematics and natural history teacher provided instruction in arithmetic, algebra, geometry and natural history combined with agriculture and horticulture, physics, history of art and skills and technical drawing⁹.

The person who would often be decisive in how effectively the department worked was the rector, whose responsibilities were defined by the Commission's Acts¹⁰. Former Jesuit Mikołaj Wieliczko received his nomination for the position of the Samogitian Department rector in late June 1783¹¹. Born in 1724, aged 22, he joined the Jesuit Order and on completing his novitiate, he taught in the lower classes of the Warsaw and Łomża colleges. In the school year 1748—1749, he was appointed professor in Kražiai, from where he was designated to go to Vilnius to study theology. On being ordained as a priest, he taught in Laucesa in Livonia, was a professor of rhetoric and history at the Vilnius Academy and a dormitory prefect in Kaunas. After the Jesuit Order suppression, he continued his work in education, and with his extensive educational and social expertise, in November 1781, he was appointed rector of the Kaunas school. In the opinion of Grzegorz Piramowicz, Mikołaj Wieliczko was “an extremely reasonable man, humane, respectful of and kind to other citizens, and originating from that same county, and diligent in his work”¹². It was likely that his reasonableness, diligence and the fact that he came “from that same county”, that he was a local, familiar with local relations, determined his designation to the position of Samogitian Department rector.

His responsibilities included, in the first place, visitations to schools under his authority, supervision over the implementation of the Commission's recommendations, as well as resolution of disputes and mitigation of conflicts (including those with the local community). Mikołaj Wieliczko performed his duties perfectly. Keen, conscientious and meticulous in school visitations, he was presented as a role model. The minutes of the Commission's session of 26 April 1785 noted that “the example set by the sitting rector of the Samogitian Department in Lithuania are compelling evidence that individuals in that position, only if they are keen enough, will make the time and find ways to fulfil their obligations”¹³. Wieliczko cared not only for educational matters, but also the living conditions of teachers and students alike. He also provided poorer students with financial support. “He keeps strict supervision over those children,

⁹ *Ustawy...*, 166—167.

¹⁰ *Ustawy...*, 99.

¹¹ *Raporty...*, 111.

¹² *Raporty...*, 87—91.

¹³ *Protokóły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1781—1785*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1915, 430.

which is visible to the naked eye in their progression, piety and conduct¹⁴. He did not trust gossip and examined profoundly cases of students' insubordination or mutinies. However, his age, excessive workload, schools' problems and teachers' insubordination led Wieliczko to resign from his post of department rector in 1792. He was superseded by Ludwik Kowzan, who, however, passed away several months after his nomination. Priest Benedykt Dobszewicz was appointed as his successor.

Visitations were an important element of school control. Although the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's Main School had formally assumed authority over schools in 1780, it was not until the school year 1783—1784 that the authority had become a genuine one. From that year onwards, the Vilnius Main School's Council addressed personnel matters, prepared visitations and discussed post-visitation reports¹⁵. The first school inspectors in 1782 and 1783 were designated by the Commission; from 1784 onwards, Lithuanian school inspectors were to be designated by the Main School in Vilnius.

The responsibilities of school inspectors were defined by Chapter 4 of the Acts. Accordingly, visits to department and sub-department school were to be carried out between April and the beginning of the summer holidays, i.e. 29 July. During a visitation, the school inspector's work consisted of inspecting documents, especially financial documents, talking with teachers and students, checking the technical state of school buildings and students' and teachers' lodgings, and studying supplies and books. He was also supposed to examine students or participate in public examinations in order to thoroughly recognise the level of teaching in a relevant school¹⁶. A school inspector was to be an approachable person, open to anyone who "if he wished to talk with the school inspector, had the liberty to tell and present his requests"¹⁷.

After the Acts were completed in 1781 and distributed to schools for verification, Grzegorz Piramowicz visited Samogitian schools between 21 June and 13 July 1782. He visited the academic schools in Kaunas and Kražiai, as well as the Piarist schools in Ukmergė, Panevėžys and Raseiniai. There was not enough time for him to visit Kretinga, but anticipating that, he had invited the Kretinga prefect to visit him in Kražiai. That way, Piramowicz collected information about teachers, students and problems of the sub-department schools. During

¹⁴ *Raporty...*, 168.

¹⁵ See: I. Szybiak, *Szkołnictwo Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim*, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1973, 117; J. Kamińska, *Universitas Vilnensis. Akademia Wileńska i Szkoła Główna Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego 1773—1792*, Pułtusk—Warsaw, 2004, 101—103.

¹⁶ *Ustawy...*, 86—87.

¹⁷ *Ustawy...*, 87.

that visitation, at the request of Samogitia County Governor Jerzy Goyżewski, Piramowicz invited the Bazilionai school's Basilian superior to Kražiai in order to personally examine the case of the school that caused the Commission plenty of problems¹⁸. His reports contained precious information for the Commission about the technical condition of and facilities available in school buildings and teachers' relations with the local community. He concluded his reports with remarks about what helped and what impeded education in a given venue.

Franciszek Bieńkowski, former Jesuit, Doctor of Law, was the Samogitian Department's next school inspector, visiting Samogitia twice, in 1783 and 1786. His reports of 1783 were short, succinct and formalised. He did not provide the Commission with any relevant information about how the syllabus was implemented, about methods of teaching or the degree to which the Acts were complied with. But three years later, in his reports, next to numbers and names, he included his societal and educational reflections, for example: "decent citizens live in proximity"¹⁹, "this place is spacious, there is no obstacle to study"²⁰. In his evaluations, he was benign and understanding²¹. But the Commission was not content with his reporting, alleging that his report "included only general comments, without itemising his observations or recommendations as a school inspector, which for the Commission's attention ought to be contained"²². In 1784, Samogitian schools were to be visited by former Jesuit Franciszek Ksawery Bohusz, and a year later, another former Jesuit, professor of theology and church law, Władysław Tautkiewicz. Unfortunately, Bohusz never delivered his reports for 1784, and Tautkiewicz in 1785 did not set out on his visitations due to illness and was eventually replaced by Dawid Pilchowski, but his reports have not been preserved²³.

In 1787, the Samogitian Department was visited by former Jesuit Dawid Pilchowski, who prepared his reports carefully, in great detail, and delivered them to the Main School on time. He talked with each group involved in education — students, school principals, teachers — separately in order to avoid mutual impact on the opinions they shared. Pilchowski displayed great skills at conversing with students, asked them questions and urged them to talk about the school and learning, and during his conversations "he praised those who

¹⁸ *Raporty...*, 69—91.

¹⁹ *Raporty...*, 165.

²⁰ *Raporty...*, 169.

²¹ H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie generalni Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Monografia z dziejów administracji szkolnej Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, Lublin, 1957, 272.

²² *Instrukcje dla wizytatorów generalnych szkół Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1774—1794*, ed. K. Bartnicka, I. Szybiak, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1976, 104.

²³ H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 271.

were giving good answers, encouraged those who were afraid, ashamed those unattentive, giving them always, however, hope of improvement, pledging which he demanded”²⁴.

In 1788 and 1790, Samogitian schools were visited by former Jesuit, retired priest Jan Erdman. Initially reluctant to the Commission and its Acts, as time went by, he warmed to the Commission and performed his duties as a school inspector conscientiously even in hard conditions, preparing his reports meticulously. In order to obtain full and reliable information about a school, he conducted private face-to-face conversations with teachers and students, whom he provoked to speak their minds saying that he had come to learn something from them²⁵.

In 1789, the department was visited by former Jesuit Jakub Jaksa, who had been involved in education since 1766. He had worked as a speech teacher at the Pinsk school, and that was where he had attracted the Commission’s attention as one who due to his “rare talents, prudence and zeal for promulgation of education was useful for schools’ supervision”²⁶. As a school inspector, he distinguished himself by his unique attitude, but was precise in the performance of his duties, prepared his reports in accordance with the Commission’s guidelines by including items from the instruction. The department’s last school inspector was Antoni Obrąpalski during his visit in 1791, which he carried out in accordance with the instructions, paying attention not only to whether “students knew what their teachers had instructed them”, but also to the language in which they spoke, “whether they were able to say what they know smoothly, without stuttering, articulately, in a proper tone, with a Polish accent, and without swallowing last syllables”²⁷.

All of the Samogitian Department school inspectors originated from the Jesuit Order, had had the experience of working as teachers, which was likely to be why they had such good understanding of and consideration for the teachers. In their work, they were conscientious, prepared their reports meticulously and gave the schools rather good evaluations, being more severe only in extreme cases²⁸. They also were kind, and local communities had a positive attitude towards them.

Like in any other community, there were cases of insubordination among the Samogitian Department’s teachers as well. Initially, introducing the rules of attending a joint table was quite difficult. In 1782, so at the very beginning, there

²⁴ Cited by: H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 274.

²⁵ H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 275.

²⁶ *Raporty...*, 130.

²⁷ *Raporty...*, 547.

²⁸ H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 271—277.

occurred cases of breach of this rule in both of the sub-department schools. One of the Kaunas teachers, Wincenty Kurkliński, refused to deposit his table salary in a joint fund²⁹, and in Kretinga, “all the teachers disobeyed the prorektor’s instructions and placed orders with a secular cook”³⁰, which was probably caused by the poor quality of food. Maintaining a joint table was often difficult due to high prices of food in Samogitia. A table salary often amounted to 650 zloty and was often insufficient for proper food, especially at sub-department schools employing three teachers, whose annual budget totalled 3,250 zloty (prorektor’s, preacher’s and three teachers’ salaries).

There were, however, no major problems in the department with the introduction of an academic gown. There was no strict prohibition, only guidelines for teachers to wear academic gowns or clerical clothes. School inspectors, however, encouraged teachers to wear an “academic” outfit, as that gave the school some degree of gravity³¹. In the Samogitian Department, teachers for a fairly long time, into the 1790s, refused to comply with the Commission’s instruction only in Kretinga; one of them, Michał Szulc, would be dressed in a “German way” during his entire tenure³².

Like all the other schools of the Commission of National Education, schools in the Samogitian Department were evaluated by school inspectors from the point of view of educational purposes. Only one out of seven schools (the Dominican school in Virbalis) received a very good evaluation. In five out of six visitations, it received a good grade five times and a fairly good grade once. The Kražiai department school was evaluated as good, the Kaunas sub-department school as average, whereas the three Piarist schools in Panevėžys, Ukmergė and Raseiniai as mediocre³³. The grade was made up of the students’ competency levels presented during the visitations and the assessment of the degree to which the curriculum and the methods complied with the Commission’s guidelines. All of that was tied with the work of the teachers, the methods they applied, as well as the available facilities, including study aids and textbooks, which were hard to come by. There were ways to arrange for textbooks, but it was harder to arrange study aids. There was scarcity of essentially anything — rulers, protractors, a plane table was a dream. Nonetheless, teachers were striving to implement the Commission’s recommendations about the practical aspect of studying. Nearly all schools provided, to a greater or lesser extent, better or worse, classes in practical geometry, and in Kretinga, a teacher explained

²⁹ H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 90.

³⁰ H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 114.

³¹ See: H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 157—158.

³² *Raporty...*, 514.

³³ There was no record of the Kretinga school (H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 169—173).

to his students the notions of high and low tides, properties of sea water and the process of obtaining sea salt³⁴.

Following the Commission's recommendations, attempts were made in the Samogitian Department at introducing exercises in military drill and students' tribunals. Although soldiers were not always available to be engaged to run military exercises, as e.g. in Kaunas they were conducted by speech teachers, arbitration courts functioned in most of the schools in line with the Acts³⁵. Those tribunals would not be always composed of the same students, as with each case, there were new arbitrators appointed, and these were supposed to resolve genuine, concrete disputes between the boys. There was no role-play involved there, but practical problem resolution³⁶.

However, there were cases when, trying to win parents' favour, teachers would be bending the curriculum and veer off the Commission's recommendations. Nobles were really attached to the study of Latin, finding fluency in this language as the ultimate goal of education, whereas the other subjects as its colourful supplement. Especially the Virbalis Dominicans were keen to cave in to such fondness. Not only did students spend multiple hours studying Latin, but they also learnt by heart maxims and poetic verses without always comprehending what they might mean³⁷. In Kretinga, in assigning writing to students, a teacher would insert into compositions Latin topics and maxims and explain that the locals "were attached to Latin and desired nothing more than their children and servants to be trained in Latin"³⁸.

The Samogitian Department was a borderland of the Commonwealth, inhabited by the Poles, Lithuanians and Germans. A problem that teachers would often encounter was that a large number of students would not speak the language of instruction. In Kražiai, Kaunas and Kretinga, teachers indicated that the first thing they had to do was to "teach them first to understand Polish"³⁹. It would sometimes happen that students came to the Kaunas school from Königsberg to learn Polish, this way causing an additional problem, because in most cases, they had already completed their own school, they were therefore well educated.

School inspectors paid considerable attention to good relations with the local community, as well as to building a positive image of the school. This was the purpose that school ceremonies would serve, which is why they were held

³⁴ I. Szybiak, *Szkolnictwo...*, 206.

³⁵ *Ustawy...*, 148.

³⁶ See: A. Kamiński, *Prehistoria polskich związków młodzieży*, Warsaw, 1959, 107—110.

³⁷ *Raporty...*, 519—520.

³⁸ A. Drozdowski to M. Poczobut, 2 May 1786, VUL, F2 DC 111, 79.

³⁹ *Raporty...*, 292.

in a particularly decorous form. The ceremony of awarding students *Diligentiae* Medals for accomplishments in education was arguably the most important ceremony. In Kražiai, in 1789, “with the multiple guests attending, in the most befitting form for this act, with the throne set up with His Royal Highness’ portrait standing upon it, assisted by this school’s youth, wearing uniforms and armed, amounting to more 100 persons, amid the sound of clamorous trumpets, timbals and cannons, did the school inspector hand out the *Diligentiae* Medals [...]. Fittingly for this circumstance, the school inspector commenced the act with a speech⁴⁰. The medal was established by King Stanislaus II Augustus in 1767 for the students of the Nobles’ Academy of the Corps of Cadets, and in 1784, he expanded the awarding to include also the students of the Commission schools.

Like in every other department, lesser or bigger problems would sometimes occur in the Samogitian Department. Permanent staff turnover was a serious impediment. Teachers would often be replaced on an annual basis, but it did not always arise from their inadequate work, but rather from the Commission’s undefined personnel policy. Such a state of affairs prevented the creation of permanent teaching staff on the one hand, and on the other, the fluency of the teaching process (especially in the case of two-year classes), as well as formulation of methods of specific conduct, appropriate for each relevant working environment. Teachers would often complain about great difficulties in their personal development. It applied not only to the young teachers, educated at the Vilnius Main School, who did not possess adequate methodological preparation⁴¹, but also to those more senior, keen to raise their competencies. On many occasions, they indicated to school inspectors the lack of coursebooks from which they could gather knowledge about how to teach. Grzegorz Pirmowicz’s *Powinności nauczyciela* [*Teacher’s duties*], which the Commission ordered to distribute among teachers of the Crown and Lithuanian schools in 1787 in the amount of 300, could help here only to a limited extent.

Drunkenness among teachers, especially in academic schools, was a serious moral problem in the department. That problem was not reported in Piarist or Dominican schools, most likely because the monks had undergone some spiritual and intellectual formation. First, they were monks, and only then, they were teachers. Some former Jesuits had retained their old monastic and professional ethos living relatively proper lives, though not everyone did so. Others, following the Jesuit Order suppression, let themselves “off the leash”,

⁴⁰ *Raporty...*, 449.

⁴¹ The obligatory function of a supervisor of junior students during the education at the Main School provided no proper methodological preparation (I. Szybiak, *Szkolnictwo...*, 188—190).

while secular teachers had not had any such brakes restricting their conduct. In Kaunas, a school inspector ordered to dismiss a teacher drunkard⁴². In Kražiai, two teachers were sacked, not only due to drunkenness, but for moral reasons, and in Kretinga, a school inspector severely admonished teachers who “very often entertained themselves with a drink in joyful company out in town”⁴³. Drinking was done in plain sight, and even students were aware of that. During students’ public showings, “at an exam, there was a drunk teacher beside me, which was what even his own students recognised”⁴⁴, a school inspector wrote to the Main School’s rector. Add to that moral problems, altercations, card games and “hanging around with the opposite sex”⁴⁵, and even demoralisation of students.

Teachers were also accused of the crimes of freethinking and contempt of religion. They very often faced charges of “getting too sentimental about religion in front of the students”⁴⁶ and failing to participate in the holy mass. Most often such charges were pressed against teachers of natural and mathematical subjects. Such “sentimentalising” would often take the form of essentially arguing rationalist beliefs. In 1791, such a charge was pressed against a very good and reputable teacher from Kretinga, Michał Szulc. Prefect Ludwik Kowzan had to explain the teacher’s rationalist attitude to the Vilnius Main School’s rector. He wrote that he had “heard Szulc deliberate that it was better to do good things rather than pray. In general, such a sentiment is not so awful, but specific circumstances might make it untimely”⁴⁷.

The job of a teacher did not provide an individual with a sense of a life stability, even though the Commission of National Education was first to attempt to secure the fate of its staff and introduced pensions. As it was a novelty, it aroused fears whether it would be effective. Uncertainty about his fate and old age can be found in a long letter written by a secular teacher Wiktor Eysmont to the Vilnius Main School’s rector. Eysmont requested being allowed to remain in Kaunas, as he leased a farm nearby, which was a source of income for him and his mother⁴⁸. On his part, Franciszek Abramowicz decided to get married. In a letter to the Vilnius Main School’s rector, Abramowicz referred not only to the Acts, which did not expressly impose teachers’ celibacy, but also to examples from academic life. “Some examples from the Vilnius and Kraków

⁴² H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 235.

⁴³ *Raporty...*, 314.

⁴⁴ J. Erdman to M. Poczobut, 11 July 1788, VUL, F2 DC 103, 15.

⁴⁵ H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 218.

⁴⁶ *Raporty...*, 541.

⁴⁷ L. Kowzan to M. Poczobut, 18 June 1791, VUL, F2 DC 111, 53—53v.

⁴⁸ W. Eysmont to M. Poczobut, 25 September 1789, VUL, F2 DC 110, 180v—181.

Main Schools show that a marital status poses no obstacle to performing one's obligations in the academic estate⁴⁹.

The Samogitian Department's other problem involved students' fighting and brawls. This time too, like in the case of teachers, the problem applied mainly to academic schools. Monastic schools were dealing with disciplinary problems much better. It was not uncommon that some students would begin their education at the age of 17 or 18 years. A school would often be a congregation of a hundred, and in Kražiai, several hundred, boys and young men contained within the space of a tiny town, under supervision of only a few teachers. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that some students, especially those in senior classes, would drink, play cards and "hang around with the opposite sex"⁵⁰. On many occasions, brawls would erupt out of a little conflict which other students would join often out of boredom, because at last something was going on. In 1782, Kražiai saw a breakout of serious riots with the use of weapons because several students had not obtained promotion⁵¹. In 1790, students in Kretinga joined in an argument of townsmen and peasants, which turned into an all-out brawl⁵². The Kražiai school's infamous tradition involved conflicts with the Jewish inhabitants who constituted the majority of the town's population⁵³. In 1790, before the Corpus Christ service, when the altars had already been set up, "a Yid threw a stone from a nearby house at that picture; doing so, he hit a student in his forehead and injured him. Students' own obedience only deterred them from causing any riot"⁵⁴. But by way of revenge, several senior students "having excavated a Jewish corpse, hung it up in a graveyard gate"⁵⁵.

There were also conflicts with local officials. In Kražiai, a conflict erupted in 1790 with the town's lessor, cup-bearer Ignacy Słowaczyński and his wife, and Rector Mikołaj Wieliczko fell victim to the dispute, as the cup-bearer's wife filed a series of very severe charges against him⁵⁶. Some genuinely grotesque disputes sometimes erupted. In Kražiai, townsmen destroyed the stairs leading out of the college's porch into the street claiming that the stairs were on the town's premises, not the college's. The rector and the prefect made their way to

⁴⁹ F. Abramowicz to M. Poczobut, 8 October 1787, VUL, F2 DC 111, 73—73v.

⁵⁰ Cited by: H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie...*, 218.

⁵¹ *Raporty...*, 76—77.

⁵² M. Wołoczewski, *Biskupstwo...*, 149.

⁵³ The conflicts dated back to the Jesuit school's days. For example, in 1717, students destroyed a wooden synagogue, and two years later, abducted Rabbi Nahumowicz from his home and accused him of ritual murder to Mikołaj Radziwiłł (M. Brensztejn, *Szkoła w Krożach na Żmudzi 1607—1843*, National Library of Poland, 10678 IV, 28).

⁵⁴ *Raporty...*, 492.

⁵⁵ *Raporty...*, 494.

⁵⁶ *Raporty...*, 495—499; VUL, F2 DC 112, 249.

the magnate's court with the intent of "repairing the stairs and punishing the abusers"⁵⁷, and received such a promise, but in the town lessor's absence, the case would remain unresolved.

A separate category of problems involved disagreements with the religious orders that provided services for the schools. The Bernardines in Kretinga let the school use the church for Sunday and holiday service, and a monk from that congregation was also the school's preacher, which "totalled 800 zloty of a separate allocation from the general fund"⁵⁸. After the fire in which the school chapel burnt down, also everyday student holy masses were transferred there, and the monks began demanding an additional 500 zloty claiming that would cover the cost of the "vestment, wax and wine"⁵⁹. In the end, the school paid 300 zloty for the masses, but the monks were not content and demanded payment of a full amount. The school, alone incapable of meeting the Bernardines' claims, requested the Commission to intervene with Vilnius Bishop Ignacy Massalski, who owned Kretinga. The Commission considered the school's request and it turned out that the Bernardines were not eligible to claim as much as 800 zloty for delivering a sermon, as "the amount of 400 zloty was, in the Commission's opinion, a sufficient amount owed to the monastery for using the congregation's monk as a preacher"⁶⁰. Therefore, the attempt of repairing the congregation's budget at the Kretinga school's cost fell through.

"Marginal" schools, unapproved by the Commission, caused the Samogitian Department's schools a different type of difficulty. They accepted students opposed to the discipline and rigours imposed by the Commission. Those were often parochial schools whose curriculum considerably exceeded their designated scope. For example, in Varnė, education was divided into three classes (infima, grammar, syntax), and "a certain noble intends to offer his fund for there to be rhetoric"⁶¹. Schools of that type operated in Kėdainiai, Jotajnie, Bazilionai and Kaunas. However, as time went by, the Commission of National Education schools were securing an ever greater approval of the Samogitia population. Therefore, Rector Michał Wieliczko contentedly wrote: "our schools are getting more and more populous. The older opinion about our schools is fading away, a new opinion is reaffirming itself, they are talking about us better and better"⁶².

⁵⁷ *Raporty...*, 493.

⁵⁸ *Raporty...*, 314.

⁵⁹ *Raporty...*, 314.

⁶⁰ *Protokóły...*, 191.

⁶¹ *Raporty...*, 78.

⁶² M. Wieliczko to M. Poczobut, B.Cz., 60—62. Cited by: J. Hulewicz, "Opinia publiczna wobec Komisji Edukacji Narodowej", in *Studia z dziejów kultury polskiej*, ed. H. Barycz, J. Hulewicz, Warsaw, 1949, 411.

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